

Reader Guide for Paul Hawken, *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming* (2017)

Philosophical questions

1. The book states that “there is no place for partisan rhetoric.” To what extent do you believe that climate change and proposed climate actions are partisan issues? Is it possible or advantageous to set aside partisan rhetoric and to embrace a “vision of cooperation” and “shared responsibility” for actions that would drawdown carbon from the atmosphere?
2. The book authors shift the frame of mind from “game over” to “game on,” a hopeful approach designed to stimulate curiosity, ingenuity, and practical wisdom. It describes the solutions as “commonly available,” “economically feasible,” and “scientifically valid.” How do you respond to the language of technological optimism?

Ranking schemes and mathematical formulas

3. Drawdown ranks each solution according to the amount of CO₂ that will be reduced. How would the solutions rank if we organized them by cost-efficiency?

Food

4. Food solutions play a significant role, with eight of sixteen solutions ranked in the top 20. According to the introduction to the food section, what we eat turns out to be the number one cause of global warming, yet the techniques, behaviors, and practices described in various solutions could transform food from source to sink. However, some solutions may not work as well in northern latitudes. Considering food solutions among the Coming Attractions as well as lessons from subsistence cultures in the North, which current food practices in AK could help to reduce greenhouse gases?
5. If Alaskans turned more toward a plant-rich diet, will that be offset by transportation costs to Alaska? Is it possible to produce a plant rich diet in Alaska for Alaskans?
6. The book proposes three strategies for shifting to a plant-rich diet--meat substitutes, the culinary celebration of plants, and reframing meat as a delicacy rather than a staple, without subsidy. How effective are these strategies in Alaska?
7. Michael Pollan asks the looming question about food and climate change in his 2008 NYT essay “[Why Bother?](#)” What case would you make for why we should bother or not bother to shift our food practices in ways that will draw down greenhouse gases?

Energy

8. The energy section makes the bold claim that we are in the middle of the greatest energy transition in history because clean energy is more competitive and less expensive than fossil fuel energy. Which of the energy solutions are most adaptable to Alaska in terms of economics or resources available?
9. *Drawdown* refers to nuclear energy as a regrets-solution. The book does not say much about SMRs or “small modular reactors.” See [Small Scale Modular Nuclear Power: An Option for Alaska](#) (2011) for more information on feasibility of SMRs in Alaska. Would it be possible to scale this solution without regrets?

10. Which *Drawdown* energy solutions appear in the [REAP Atlas](#) and how do they compare to the profiles in the book? [biomass, geothermal, hydroelectric, ocean and river hydrokinetic, solar, wind?]
11. Which energy solutions that meet the needs of rural communities might also benefit a larger population beyond Alaska?

Women and Girls

12. Educating girls and family planning, two solutions that go hand-in-hand, would have a great impact on lowering carbon dioxide. What is the relationship between education and family planning?
13. Since North American birth rates are already down, how will education of women and girls help draw down carbon in our region?
14. How well do the chapters on women and girls address fundamental differences in regions where population vs consumption influence greenhouse gas emissions?

Buildings and Cities

15. The state of Alaska is a geographic outlier from the contiguous United States. How have the design of buildings and cities been influenced by trends further south, and what might our state learn from northern countries at a similar latitude when it comes to the energy efficient design of buildings and cities?
16. Is it possible to design a pedestrian and bike-friendly city in the north? What lessons can we adapt from other winter cities?
<https://www.wired.com/story/world-best-cycling-cities-copenhagenize/>

Land Use

17. What historical and contemporary indigenous land use practices in Alaska make the most sense for drawing down greenhouse gases?

Transport

18. As *Drawdown* claims, “transportation cannot be separated by how and where people live, work, and play.” For all those reasons--living, working, playing--Alaskans routinely travel great distances. Which solutions will allow Alaskans to have the greatest drawdown?

Materials

19. Refrigerants are a leading cause of global warming, and their management is the number one solution in the book. Ninety percent of refrigerant emissions come at the end of life. How are Alaskans managing the disposal of refrigerant chemicals?
20. As global temperatures rise, the use of refrigerants is likely to increase proportionally, making it even more imperative that they are disposed of effectively at the end of life. What is the current U.S. position and practice for the reduction of CFCs and HCFCs? Is it adequate?